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More oversight, training urged for lie detector tests

By Sam Vincent Meddis
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A special panel looking into security at the CIA is expected to tell Congress today that the agency should keep using polygraph tests — but with more oversight and training.

The recommendation comes in the wake of the Aldrich Ames spy case, which has raised doubts about overall agency security and the reliability of lie detector tests.

Ames, a career officer at the CIA, passed two polygraphs during the time he's accused of spying for the Soviet Union's KGB and the Russian intelligence service.

The CIA-Pentagon group, which has been studying security-related issues since May, says in a final report it is "concerned about over-reliance on the polygraph" by intelligence and defense agencies.

Other recommendations for the Senate Intelligence Committee include standardizing background investigations and better security coordination between the government and defense contractors.

Also Wednesday:

▶ The chairmen of the Senate and House intelligence committees introduced bills to slash the number of classified documents, keeping a tighter lid on the most sensitive ones.

"Our system is just inundated and overburdened with the classification of millions of documents every year," says Senate panel Chairman Dennis DeConcini, D-Ariz.

He estimates the government now classifies about 7 million documents annually.

▶ Prosecutors asked a federal court to seize more than $2.2 million in the Ameses' bank accounts — including "repatriating" money stashed in overseas accounts. Defense lawyers say they'll fight the request at a hearing set for March 10.